

Last Days of Persecution

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cunning and better devised system than before. His court at Antioch was the gathering place of all the priests, magicians, and thaumaturgists of the East, who found in him a generous patron. We hear of a new deity being invented by Theotecnus, or rather of an old deity being invested with new attributes. Zeus I'hilios, or Jupiter the Friendly was the name of this god, to whom a splendid statue was erected in Antioch, and to whose shrine a new priesthood, with new rites, was solemnly dedicated. The god was provided with an attendant oracle to speak in his name; what more natural than that the first response should order the banishment of all Christians from the city ? Very noteworthy, too, was the re-appearance of a vigorous anti-Christian literature. Maximin set on his pamphleteers to write; libellous parodies of the Christian doctrines and encouraged the more serious controversialists on the pagan side to attack the Christian religion wherever it was most vulnerable. The most famous of these productions was one which bore the name of *The Ads of Pilate* and purported to be a relation by Pilate himself of the life and conduct of Christ. It was really an old pamphlet rewritten and brought up to date, full, as Kusebius says, of all conceivable blasphemy against Christ and reducing Him to the level of a common malefactor. Maximin welcomed it with delight. He had thousands of copies written and distributed; extracts were cut on brass and stone and posted up in conspicuous places ; the work was appointed to be read frequently in public, and— what shews most of all the fury and cunning of